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SUBJECT: SERBIA: FM JEREMIC TAKES A BRUISING IN THE PRESS

Summary

(SBU) Recent articles in Serbia's media about the EU's displeasure with Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic's rhetoric are causing a bruising for the media-conscious Jeremic. The simultaneous timing of the stories leaves open speculation that some within his Democratic Party (DS) may be trying to reign in the outspoken FM. End summary.

Media Reports EU Critical of Jeremic

¶2. (SBU) Serbian media recently published several articles about how FM Jeremic's growing rhetoric is annoying EU member countries. On November 20 Novi Sad-based daily "Dnevnik," (which is partly owned by German media company WAZ) published an article citing a supposed internal EU document drafted by EU officials following the European Commission's annual report on Serbia's EU integration process, which was published this month. According to "Dnevnik," the supposed EU document criticizes Jeremic's use of "unacceptable rhetoric" and says that Jeremic's statements could be "undermining Serbia's EU aspirations." The daily writes that many EU members have expressed their displeasure at Jeremic's recent "outbursts." German officials called his statements "damaging for Serbia." Jeremic is "trying to blame the EU for his own government's failings in advance," German diplomats believe, according to the daily. "Dnevnik" reports that British officials find Jeremic's statements, "detrimental to both regional stability, the role of the EU, and to Serbia itself." The daily cites additional criticisms of Jeremic from unnamed Italian, Belgian, Swedish, Hungarian, and Czech diplomats.

¶3. (SBU) In the same tone, Belgrade daily "Blic" published a November 21 article saying that according to European officials, Jeremic is among the most unpopular regional politicians. The article, citing a "Blic" source in Brussels, says Jeremic always tends to "teach lessons to everybody", and therefore foreign officials are trying to avoid meeting with him. "Blic" notes that, due to his populist rhetoric and behavior, Jeremic's popularity in Serbia is growing, while at the same time, his credibility among neighbor states and the international community is plunging. In foreign circles Jeremic is seen as a politician who changes positions all the time and who "does not want to hear what his interlocutors want to tell him," writes "Blic."

Comment

¶4. (SBU) Jeremic, who has closely followed his own rise in Serbia's popularity polls, will likely take offense to the EU criticisms against him and his jingoistic style. With these criticisms now public, even among government-friendly media, Jeremic may now be facing growing disdain for his leadership style from within his own party ranks. End comment.

